

**Remarks by Eric Benjaminson
Deputy Chief of Mission, U.S. Embassy/Namibia
UNA-USA HERO EVENT**

**Hainyeko Primary School, Ohangwena Region
Friday, July 20, 2007**

It's a pleasure to join you here today at the Hainyeko Primary School to celebrate this unique partnership that focuses on the educational needs of children.

This partnership involves the public and private sectors, bilateral and multilateral development partners; learners and teachers; parents and their community; and the young and the not-so-young.

Zach Hudson has explained the *HERO* Campaign to you; and, Claudia Harvey has explained UNESCO's role in the HERO campaign. I'd like to take a moment to explain the U.S. Government's connection to the HERO campaign and why we support it so strongly.

With resources from the American People, the US Agency for International Development, under its Global Development Alliance initiative, provided the initial grant to the United Nations Association of the United States of America (UNA-USA) for the HERO campaign to provide school-based support to children in need. USAID support continues.

We enthusiastically support the HERO program for a number of reasons:

- HERO utilizes the talents, energy, idealism and enthusiasm of students from the U.S.
- HERO develops leadership and increases global awareness among young Americans, and may well prove a training ground for future American diplomats!
- HERO gives Namibians and Americans a chance to know one another better, and celebrate and strengthen our common bonds.
- HERO gives Americans an opportunity to express our inherent generosity and demonstrate our interest in and support for people living outside our own borders.
- HERO taps the expertise of the Urban Trust of Namibia (UTN) and UNESCO, talented and experienced colleagues who know Namibia, particularly the North, and know the education field.
- HERO's association with the United Nations through the UN Association of the U.S.A. opens doors and hearts in Namibia -- given the long and close association between Namibia and the UN.
- HERO directly supports two of my Government's top priorities in Namibia -- to support our partners in the Ministry of Education in improving basic education, and to assist the Government and NGOs to expand care, support and education to

Orphans and Vulnerable Children. Both of these initiatives fall clearly within the Ministry of Education's Education Sector planning and coordination framework -- *ETSIP*. USAID support under Namibia's ETSIP framework focuses primarily on improving basic education in the north and on extending care and support, including education, to orphans and vulnerable children.

- HERO leverages the resources, networks and creativity of, in this case, Proctor and Gamble from the private sector to extend care, support and education to children in need.
- And, last but not least, the most important reason to admire and support the HERO program is, of course, because it extends a helping hand to schools and learners that are in need..

For all these reasons, today is a happy and hopeful day. The UNA-USA HERO program is part of a dynamic and dedicated coalition devoted to meeting the needs of the nation's children. We thank you for the important work you are all doing. With help from their government, families, schools, churches, and friends -- including, the UNA-USA HERO Campaign -- these children will receive the care and the education they need to become productive and independent citizens of this young nation, and to themselves become healthy and caring mothers and fathers.

We are proud to be a part of the HERO program and wish all of you who are working together on behalf of the nation's children, strength and every success.